

Maine Department of Labor
20 Union Street, P.O. Box 259
Augusta, Maine 04332-0259

Maine Enterprise Option (MEO)

Is starting your own business the right choice for you?

1. Who can apply for the MEO program?

You can apply if you have been “profiled” as being “likely to exhaust” your unemployment benefits. (Individuals who have been profiled as “likely to exhaust” will receive a special letter.) To find out more about the “profiling” requirement, ask your local CareerCenter.

Additional Eligibility Requirements:

- A. At the time you apply, there are at least 18 weeks left in your benefit year and the amount which is left in your unemployment account is equal to at least 18 times your weekly benefit amount. (If you have any interest in the MEO program, you should apply as soon as possible. In some cases, your remaining benefits may drop below the minimum amount required by the time that you fill out an application.)
- B. You file a MEO program application *within 60 days* of the date that you filed your initial claim for unemployment benefits. If you are not sure of the date you filed your initial claim, check with your Unemployment Compensation Call Center. While you have 60 days to submit your application, we encourage you to apply as soon as you can.
- C. You are a Maine Resident.
- D. You have a specific business idea in mind.

2. What types of training and assistance can you receive?

- A. If you are accepted into the MEO program, you will attend a “*Business Start-Up Workshop*” and will be asked to choose additional business trainings that cover the following topics:
 - Personal qualities required for business, personal financial requirements, setting long and short term goals for business
 - The various forms of business organization
 - Business Plan Development

- Resources and information on getting started
- Marketing
- Cash Flow Projections and Financial Statements
- Financing
- Record Keeping and Taxes
- Legal and Insurance Issues

B. A business counselor will meet with you “one-on-one” shortly after you are accepted into the MEO program. You will also have one additional required meeting with a business counselor. A business counselor will continue to be available to you during your participation in MEO.

3. Are there any differences between collecting “regular” unemployment benefits and benefits under the MEO program?

Yes, there are some differences. Under the MEO program, you would have to be in the process of starting your own business, or working at that business, full time (40 hours per week). You would not have to be looking for work and you would not have to be available to work for another employer.

4. Where do the weekly benefits for the MEO program come from?

Your weekly benefits under MEO would still come from your regular unemployment benefit account.

5. How to apply.

To apply, contact your local CareerCenter. You will be scheduled to attend an orientation session. If you are still interested in applying for the MEO program at the end of the orientation session, ask for an application. Take the application home and return it as soon as possible.

REMINDER:* You must return the completed application **within 60 days of the date on which you filed your initial claim for unemployment benefits.*

CareerCenter Telephone Numbers

CareerCenter Help Line: 1-888-982-4311
TTY: 1-800-794-1110

Augusta624-5120 1-800-760-1573
Bangor.....561-4050 1-888-828-0568
Bath.....442-0300 1-888-836-3355
Belfast338-5158 1-877-421-7917
Calais.....454-7551 1-800-543-0303
Dover Foxcroft.....564-8358 1-800-350-4165
East Millinocket746-9608 1-800-777-8173
Ellsworth.....664-2300 1-800-371-7543
Fort Kent834-5135
Houlton532-5300 1-800-691-0033
Lewiston.....753-9000 1-800-741-2991
Machias.....255-1900 1-800-292-8929
Madawaska728-6345 1-800-432-7881
Newcastle.....563-8697
Norway.....743-7763 / 7764
Portland771-5627 1-877-594-5627
Presque Isle760-6300 1-800-635-0357
Rockland594-9576 1-877-421-7916
Rumford364-3738 1-877-421-7915
Saco.....286-2650 1-800-760-1570
Sanford.....324-5460 1-800-343-0151
Skowhegan.....474-4950 1-800-760-1572
Waterville.....872-5516
Wilton645-5800 1-800-982-4311